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Northridge Transit Oriented District Neighborhood Implementation Plan and Strategy

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CHAPTER I. BACKGROUND

A. WHAT IS A TRANSIT ORIENTED NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The Northridge Neighborhood Implementation Plan and Strategy is a Transit Oriented District (TOD) Plan, an implementation tool new in practice to the City of Los Angeles, but not new in concept. This type of neighborhood implementation/TOD plan has its roots in the Concept Los Angeles plan adopted in the 1960s and more recently in the Land Use/Transportation Policy, adopted by both the City Council and the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Agency (MTA) Board in November, 1993, in the General Plan Framework Element, adopted December 11, 1996 and finally in the goals, objectives and policies of the Transportation Element of the General Plan, approved July 24, 1997 by the City Planning Commission and adopted September 8, 1999 by City Council.

Neighborhood plans are not adopted as part of the City's General Plan, but are more of a tool box of implementation tools - similar to a Specific Plan - which can be used by a community for the purpose of implementing the Community Plans, which are the Land Use element of the general plan. A Neighborhood Plan focuses on the area generally within 1/4 mile of a transit station, with the intent of making the area around the station more conducive to using the transit system, be it the heavy, light rail, or rubber wheel type of transit. The area needs to be pedestrian friendly to encourage walking, to reduce automobile trips, to improve air quality, and in general to make transit an asset to the neighborhood.

To the extent that the City has ability to implement the community's vision for the long range future, the Northridge Neighborhood Implementation Plan and Strategy was created as a guide to improve the neighborhood environment, by making it a more economically viable, transit friendly and livable community. The Plan was developed in cooperation with: area residents, property owners, and businesses; the Department of City Planning; consultants in the fields of urban design, economics, and parking; public agencies; and elected officials. These groups met at a public workshop, economic focus group discussion, bus tour, and urban design charrettes, July 29, 1999 through November 3, 1999.

The Neighborhood Implementation Plan is an implementation tool for the Northridge Community Plan. It defines the regulations affecting the area immediately around the Metrolink station located at Wilbur Avenue and Parthenia Street in a more finite manner. The Neighborhood Plan is a tool to help guide and stimulate growth, and to make Northridge a more attractive and liveable place to live and work. The Plan area is bounded by Nordhoff Street on the north, Napa Street on the south, Reseda Boulevard on the east, and Tampa Avenue on the west.

This plan encourages increased ridership and use of the commuter rail system at the Northridge Metrolink Station. The plan accomplishes this through urban design and land use standards more in keeping with the increased investment in public transit.

The land use, urban design, open space and streetscape recommendations of this plan generally extend out one-quarter mile from the Northridge Station. This one-quarter mile radius is the typical standard for the distance pedestrians will willingly walk to surrounding uses.

This Neighborhood Implementation Plan does not advocate, stimulate or create more population growth. The Neighborhood Plan relies for its population projections on the community plan update of the Northridge Community Plan's population growth estimates.

B. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

In 1906, when the Southern Pacific railroad built a railroad from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, a station-stop was located on land north of the tracks and just west of Reseda Boulevard off of Eddy Street. At this time the San Fernando Valley was an agricultural area. By the 1920's this stop was a major shipping center for produce. After World War II the Valley developed quickly into suburban residential tracts to accommodate the demand for housing by returning servicemen and their families. Reflecting the changing land uses in the Valley, the Eddy Street station was torn down.

The current station site, west of the former depot and south of the tracks, was opened shortly after the 1994 Northridge earthquake as a temporary train stop for commuters who were unable to use damaged freeways. The parcel chosen for the station stop was owned by the City of Los Angeles and Metrolink was able to acquire this land quickly. The land was vacant, adjacent to the tracks and required little investment to set up the existing parking lot and platform.

C. NORTHRIDGE METROLINK STATION SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The Northridge Metrolink Station is located in an area surrounded by a single-family residential area north of the railroad tracks. Northeast of the station site a power line right-of-way transverses a residential area. To the northwest is a flood control basin for Aliso Canyon Wash. The power lines continue to a site east of the station that is owned by the Department of Water and Power. They continue south of the station along Aliso Canyon Wash. To the south is a multi-family residential neighborhood. Different industrial uses exist to the east and west of the station including a junkyard immediately west of the station.

Although the station site is suitable for an emergency train station, certain challenges have to be considered if the goal is to increase Metrolink ridership and revitalize the surrounding area with compatible transit-friendly uses - namely, accessibility. The station is not visible from Parthenia Street and only a small sign marks the entrance to the station site. There is also no vehicular and pedestrian connection to the north side of the tracks. The Department of Public Works yard and the Department of Water and Power switching station, major industrial-type sites, are not susceptible to change.

Another station-area urban design challenge is the fact that there are few amenities in the vicinity of the Metrolink Station. The industrial uses to the north, south and west are older, poorly

maintained and lack landscaping, signage, and nighttime lighting. Housing to the south and west is in poor condition and over-crowded. In general, the surrounding area is not visually pleasant.

Existing Land Uses

Industrial land uses generally follow the east-west path of the tracks throughout the study area. Parthenia Street from Reseda Boulevard to Tampa Avenue is sided by commercial and light industrial sites such as machine shops and automotive uses. A storage facility exists to the immediate north of the station site.

Housing is built to the north and south of the station site. Just north of the station are generally stable single-family house neighborhoods. North and west of the station is a large concentration of mobile home parks. A concentration of multiple-family housing is immediately south of the station. These garden apartment units are generally poorly maintained and over-crowded. Approximately one-half mile north of the station is a concentration of large open properties that are rural in character and reflect an earlier era of development in the San Fernando Valley. The most significant of these properties is Rancho Cordillera del Norte. The owner of this property opens it to the public for cultural and recreational purposes.

The station is approximately one-half mile from two commercial and retail areas. The newer retail district is west of the station along Tampa Avenue and incorporates modern strip-shopping centers, big-box retail, and the recently redeveloped Northridge Fashion Plaza. To the northwest of the station, bounded by the tracks and facing Tampa Avenue is a Costco Wholesale store. A second older retail/commercial district lies east of the station along Reseda Boulevard and is characterized by an automobile-oriented Main Street with smaller neighborhood-serving retail uses and active sidewalks.

The Wilkinson Senior Center is to the northwest of the station. California State University at Northridge (Cal State Northridge) is a major, if somewhat distant, institutional use (approximately one mile by street), that attracts thousands of people on a daily basis, a few of whom are train commuters and use the Northridge Metrolink station stop. There are two elementary schools, one two blocks to the north and one two blocks to the south of the station.

While much of the land in the study area could be characterized as underutilized, there are few vacant sites. Much of the sense of openness is created by publicly owned right-of-ways. To the north and west, the Wilkinson Senior Center opens up into Van Alden Park. This park ends in a flood control area known as the Wilbur Avenue Debris Basin. This basin serves floodwaters originating in the Santa Susanna Mountains to the north that flow south into the Aliso Canyon Wash. North and east of the station, power lines flow down in an open and unlandscaped right-of-way. They stop at a Department of Water and Power transfer station immediately to the east of the station site and then continue south along the Aliso Canyon Wash.

Streetscape and Pedestrian Conditions

In general, the station area is a harsh environment with little sense of human scale that does not encourage use by pedestrians. The area around the Metrolink Station has few pedestrian amenities. In some areas there are no sidewalks. There are few trees on the station site. The nearby Department of Water and Power site, the junkyard and the neighboring open spaces are also free of trees. Although a large portion of Metrolink riders approach the station from the north there is neither vehicular nor pedestrian access across the tracks to the station. The nearest safe places to cross the tracks are on Tampa Avenue or Reseda Boulevard, one-half mile to the east and west respectively.

D. IMPLICATIONS OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILES

For purposes of this analysis, the Study Area has been defined as all census block groups that are located within one-mile of the Northridge transit station. In essence, the Study Area is bounded by Plummer Street to the north, Roscoe Boulevard to the south, Lindley Avenue to the east, and Corbin Avenue on the west. The Study Area was divided into further subareas for a more detailed analysis. The North sub-area corresponds to all block groups north of the Metrolink tracks, while the South sub-area includes all block groups south of the tracks.

Research and demographic studies indicate that there is lower usage of public transportation in the Study Area. Under 4 percent of the Study Area population utilizes public transportation. This compares to a 10 percent utilization rate by City of Los Angeles residents.

On average, employed residents within the Study Area work closer to their residence. Over 30 percent of the Study Area labor force is employed within 15 minutes of their homes. This is compared to the City-wide average of over 20 percent. Likewise, the proportion of Study Area residents who are required to travel over 15 minutes to work is lower than the City-wide average (59 percent versus 69 percent).

The proportion of transit-dependent households is lower in the Study Area. Only 6 percent of the Study Area households lack direct access to means of personal transportation. However, for the City of Los Angeles, this figure is much higher, at 15 percent.

The average age of Study Area residents is slightly higher than the City of Los Angeles (32.2 versus 31.9 years). The Study Area has a higher proportion of residents within the "18 to 34 years" age group, which causes the average age in the area to be slightly higher.

Research and demographic studies also indicate that there is less ethnic diversity in the Study Area. The proportion of White residents in the Study Area is very high when compared to the City-wide statistics. Approximately 53 percent of the City of Los Angeles residents are classified under the "White" ethnic group. However, for Study Area residents, this proportion is much higher, at approximately 67 percent. Also, the proportion of residents classified under the "African-American" ethnic group in the Study Area is low, when compared to City-wide figures (4 percent versus 14

percent). In addition, the percentage of residents in the Study Area that consider themselves of Hispanic Origin, is lower than the City-wide average (30 percent versus 40 percent).

A comparison of the two sub-areas provides more insight into the local demographic characteristics of the overall area. A summary of the demographic comparison between the North and South sub-areas indicates that per capita income and average household income in the North Sub-Area is higher. Per capita income in the North Sub-Area is approximately $23,000. Average household income for the same area is approximately $63,000. These figures are significantly higher than the income statistics for the South Sub-Area. Per capita income for this area is $15,000, while average household income is $52,000. Twenty-nine percent of the Study Area labor force is employed within 15 minutes of their homes. This is compared to the City-wide average of over 20 percent. Likewise, the proportion of Study Area residents who are required to travel over 15 minutes to work is lower than the City-wide average (59 percent versus 69 percent).

On average, employed residents within the North Sub-Area work closer to their residence. Over 31 percent of the North Sub-Area labor force is employed within 15 minutes of their homes. This compares to the South Sub-Area where only 27 percent have a travel time to work of less than 15 minutes. Likewise, the proportion of North Sub-Area residents who are required to travel over 15 minutes to work is lower than the South Sub-Area (56 percent versus 62 percent).

There is a higher proportion of White residents in the North Sub-Area. The proportion of White residents in the Study Area is very high when compared to the South Sub-Area or the Study Area as a whole. Approximately 58 percent of South Sub-Area residents and 67 percent of Study Area residents are classified under the "White" ethnic group. However, for the North Sub-Area, this proportion is much higher, at over 76 percent.

The percentage of residents of Hispanic Origin in the North Sub-Area is lower. Only 11 percent of North Sub-Area residents are of Hispanic Origin. However, this figure is much higher for the South Sub-Area, at approximately 50 percent.

The average age of North Sub-Area residents is very high when compared to the South Sub-Area or the Study Area as a whole (33.9 versus 30.2 and 32.2 years, respectively). The North Sub-Area has a very higher proportion of residents within the "18 to 34 years" age group (43 percent), which causes the average age in the area to be higher than the South Sub-Area.

Both sub-areas have an average household size larger than the City-wide average of 2.8 persons. However, the South Sub-Area averages 3.3 persons per household, while the North Sub-Area has an average household size of 2.9 persons.

Profile of Existing Firms in Plan Area

Currently, there are approximately 1,600 business establishments in the Northridge TOD Study Area. The combined annual sales volume for all businesses in the Study Area is estimated at

approximately $2.2 billion. Most firms in the Study Area (75 percent) would be considered "small-businesses" employing from one to nine people. There are only a handful of large employers in the area; only nine firms employ more than 250 people.

Approximately 133 businesses in the Study Area are classified as Construction firms, representing about 8% of the total number of firms in the Study Area and just over 4% of local employment. There are a total of 114 Manufacturing businesses in the Study Area. These businesses represent 6.7% of the total number of firms in the Study Area and over 14% of employment. There are approximately 37 businesses in the Study Area that can be classified as Service-producing industrial businesses. These businesses account for about 2% of the total number of businesses in the local area and 1.5% of employment. There are nearly 700 firms in the Study Area that are classified as Retail Commercial businesses. This represents over 30% of the total number of businesses in the Study Area and nearly 50% of the total business employment in the Study Area. This high concentration of jobs in the retail sector reflects the presence of the Northridge Fashion Center - a "super regional" scale shopping center - as well as other regional serving retail uses (e.g., Costco) near the general vicinity of the intersection of Nordhoff and Tampa. There are approximately 650 businesses in the Study Area that fall into categories that are typically based in office facilities, representing over 40% of the total number of businesses in the Study Area and accounting for nearly 23% of total employment.

CHAPTER II. NORTHRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD VISION

As mentioned in Chapter I, the Plan was developed in cooperation with: Northridge residents; property owners; businesses; the Department of City Planning; consultants in the fields of urban design, economics, and parking; public agencies; and elected officials. These groups met at a public workshop, economic focus group discussion, bus tour, and urban design charrettes, July 29, 1999 through November 3, 1999. In addition, a questionnaire was mailed and distributed to area residents, businesses, and commuters using the Northridge Metrolink station. The result of these meetings and questionnaire was the identification of key issues and the creation of a vision for the Metrolink Station and surrounding neighborhood.

A. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

There were over 200 responses to the questionnaire out of the approximately 5000 that were sent to residents of the area and commuters using the Northridge Metrolink station. Key issues that impact the development of design concepts for the station are as follows:

1) Residents as well as commuters perceive that the station area lacks adequate lighting, signage and shade-providing trees. Residents of the area have a particularly poor image of the station area.

2) More commuters might be attracted to use Metrolink if "smart" shuttle service was provided.

3) A slim majority of residents felt that there could be an advantage to moving the station from its existing location to Tampa Avenue.

4) Both residents and commuters felt that the station would function better if it was developed to include more jobs, community facilities, and shopping opportunities.

B. SURVEY RESULTS IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE PUBLIC WORKSHOP

1) The survey suggested that a slim majority of residents were interested in moving the station-stop to Tampa Avenue. In comparison, at the July29, 1999 Public Workshop strong interest was expressed by those that attended in moving the Metrolink Station to Reseda Boulevard and having a shuttle link to area destinations such as Reseda Boulevard shopping and Cal State Northridge.

2) Workshop attendees, like survey respondents, felt that physical improvements were needed to improve the character of the station. In particular, workshop attendees stated that screening the DWP (Department of Water and Power) and DPW (Department of Public Works) properties would be beneficial.

3) Workshop attendees proposed that Wilbur Avenue be linked from north to south across the tracks.

4) Workshop attendees also felt that increased jobs, community facilities, and shopping opportunities were keys to successfully developing the area.

C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP MEETING

The following key issues were raised by the participating business stakeholders:

1) Parking is an issue; City needs to consider possibility of developing parking structures to serve Reseda Boulevard

2) Northridge has a very unique mix of assets/land uses, including: University, Regional shopping, Hospital, Police station, Golf Course

3) Northridge is a very balanced community - stakeholders do not want to lose small-town feeling (retain the "village concept")

4) Future development efforts should encourage small businesses, pedestrian setting - not high density traffic

5) Cal State Northridge has 30,000 students - the community needs more restaurants and businesses to attract them in the evening (pedestrian friendly neighborhood for students)

6) Senior citizens need places they can easily walk to (Wilkinson Center, Korean Senior Citizen Center)

7) Safety is not a problem now, and maintaining a safe community is a priority. There is strong community support for LAPD

8) Cultural facilities are important to village character

9) Someone need to develop a waiting area for day workers around station, with restrooms

10) Industrial area needs improvement, possible land use options would include: hotel and hostelry

11) Wilbur Avenue should be completed as through street, providing a means of getting to the station from the north of the tracks

12) The City should develop a landscape and urban design plan for the area, addressing the following components: trees, lighting, signage (control), street maintenance, improving bus stops (benches, trash, receptacles)

13) City should change name of Reseda Boulevard to "University Way"

14) Target revitalization around station

15) City should provide mixed-use zoning around station

CHAPTER III. THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

A. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Based upon a review of existing zoning, field observations, community input, and the work of the consultants, the following general opportunity districts and nodes were identified.

Opportunity Zone 1: Station Site Node

The existing station site is not utilized for any purpose other than surface parking. Land immediately west of the station and north of the tracks is occupied by a junk yard and storage uses respectively and contributes to a perception of underutilization at the station area.

Portions of the station site as well as the Parthenia Street frontage could be developed with uses complimentary to the station use such as retail services that could be used by both commuters and

area residents. More commuters might in fact be attracted to the station if uses that served their needs were immediately adjacent to the station. Connecting Wilbur Avenue north to south by constructing an underpass at the tracks would also increase accessibility to and identity of the station, and better connect it to northerly neighborhoods.

Opportunity Zone 2: Residential and Open Space District

This area is characterized by generally well-maintained single-family houses and "ranchettes", larger parcels of land with single-family homes where owners farm and/or keep horses. The largest of these parcels is the Rancho Cordillera del Norte. Opportunity Zone 2 also straddles two major open space resources: the DWP right-of-way and Van Alden Park. These open space resources could be connected if this area was developed as parkland. Additionally, this area could be developed with additional housing that would be within walking distance of the existing Northridge train station.

Opportunity Zone 3: Residential and Light Industrial District

South of Parthenia Street, and on the west side of Wilbur Avenue, is an older area of medium density housing. On the east side of Wilbur Avenue is an area of light industrial buildings. Many of the buildings in this zone are in poor condition making the area visually unpleasing. Much of the housing is overcrowded and in the recent past was a center of crime activity. This area has become more accessible to the region given its proximity to the train station. Consideration should be given to revitalizing the area with new and improved uses, including job-producing businesses and improved housing that will attract commuters who seek residences within walking distance of the station.

Opportunity Zone 4: Northridge Fashion Center District

This area is characterized by newer retail and commercial uses including the recently renovated Northridge Fashion Center, a major regional shopping mall. Additionally, bit-box retailing has been attracted to large acreage sites along Tampa Boulevard north and south of the train tracks. At the northeast corner of this area, adjacent to Van Alden Park, is a mobile home park. This is within potential walking distance of the station. Opportunities exist to further develop similar commercial/ retail uses and housing in this area that takes advantage of the open space and proximity to the station.

B. RECOMMENDED STATION AREA IMPROVEMENTS

The Plan proposes the revitalization of the existing Northridge Metrolink Station into a multi-modal transportation center. This center offers a limited range of services and amenities to commuters, area workers, and residents. A new station depot adjacent to the tracks is designed to accommodate mechanized commuter amenities such as coffee and snack food machines, a newsstand, and could include space for community services. Surface parking is shaded by trees, and extensive landscaping creates the sense of a garden. At the south end of the surface lot, a parking structure accommodates

additional commuters.

Greatly improving accessibility to Metrolink, Wilbur Avenue passes from north to south under the tracks. Along both Wilbur Avenue and Parthenia Street wide setbacks incorporate landscaped parkways, street trees, and wider sidewalks. Palm trees interspersed with evergreen canopy trees line these streets and make them comfortable for walking and bicycling. A new trail network follows Aliso Canyon Wash and connects the Parthenia sidewalks to an enlarged and improved Van Alden Park. Additional hiking and bike trails follow the DWP right-of-way all the way to the Northridge Metrolink depot.

Just north of the tracks new townhouses are within easy walking distance of the train station. A major revitalization effort has also improved the existing manufacturing areas adjacent to the tracks. Low-rise buildings that can flexibly accommodate either office uses or clean industrial uses are built in park-like surroundings along the railroad right-of-way. South of Parthenia Street, rehabilitated apartment buildings are home to residents with a wide range of incomes. These individuals and families take daily advantage of the services, businesses, open space resources, and transit accessibility that are all within walking distance of their homes.

Northridge Metrolink Station has become more than a place that people commute to and from. It is an interconnected walkable community with good jobs, a wide variety of housing choices, neighborhood services, and active and passive open spaces.

The following general urban design guidelines will encourage better pedestrian access, improved identity, and higher intensity of use at the station site.

i. Build a station that can accommodate station-servicing retail use plus offices for community services and/or buildings such as the Metrolink station at Chatsworth (see

ii. Provide sidewalks and pedestrian pathways clearly visible from Parthenia Street, structured parking, and neighborhood-serving retail at the train station site.

iii. Provide full landscaping, nighttime lighting and clear pedestrian pathways at the existing surface parking lot.

iv. Develop structured parking for commuters and adjacent neighborhood serving retail.

v. To promote alternatives to automobile travel to and from the station, shuttle service to the surrounding community should be provided as well as the installation of bicycle locks, bicycle lanes and sidewalks.

vi. Install more visible signage on Parthenia Street identifying the station.

C. GENERAL RECOMMENDED LAND USE CHANGES

There are four general land uses proposed for the Northridge Metrolink Station area (see illustration). The first (A, E, F) incorporates flexible office and light industrial uses. This land use would be applied to the existing Metrolink Station site as well as the parcels east of the station area to Van Alden Avenue along the north side of Parthenia Street. Flex office and industrial uses should also be applied to parcels on the side of Parthenia Street between Wilbur Avenue and Yolanda Street, and the north side of Parthenia Street from Yolanda Street to Reseda Boulevard. This land use allows existing and new non-noxious manufacturing uses as well as high-skill jobs-producing commercial uses. Neighborhood serving retail uses should also be encouraged in these areas. The goal for this land use area is that existing and new manufacturing uses as well as high-skill jobs-producing commercial uses and neighborhood-serving retail uses should be encouraged. Guidelines include: 1) Total maximum density should not exceed 1.5:1; 2) Maximum height should not exceed 60 feet; 3) Open space zoning should be maintained; 4) Automobile oriented uses should be prohibited along Parthenia Street between Reseda Boulevard and Wilbur Avenue; 5) To encourage the development of higher-skill jobs-producing uses, stand-alone storage yards should be discouraged except when incidental to a manufacturing or commercial use; 6) Parking zones should be changed to flexible uses.

A second land use is referred to as Very-Low Density Housing (B), and is recommended for the area south of the intersection of Nordhoff Street with Wilbur Avenue. This area contains ranchos that are symbolic of an earlier Valley lifestyle. To preserve its character, the goal of this land use area is to encourage the development of buildings and properties incorporating very low residential densities. The guideline for this area is that along Wilbur Avenue a 12 foot sidewalk/parkway should be required.

The third recommended land use is Low-Medium Density Housing (D). These areas would be built-out with town-house style residences. This use is recommended for the parcels just north of the train tracks where there is currently a storage yard and at the mobile home park on the south side of Nordhoff Street west of Van Alden Avenue. Area C should be designated with a CM zoning. The future emphasis, however, should be toward building multiple dwelling developments to support the transit station, but allowing the market to determine the correct use while not creating non-conforming uses. The goal of this land use area is to encourage the development of buildings and properties incorporating low-medium density residential uses. The guideline for this area is that along Wilbur Avenue a 12 foot sidewalk/parkway should be required.

The fourth recommended land use is Medium Density housing. This is consistent with the area south of the Metrolink Station, and east to Tampa Avenue along Parthenia Street (G). The goal of this area is to encourage the revitalization of buildings and properties incorporating medium density residential uses. This is an area of poorly maintained multiple-family housing which is in need of revitalization. The higher density zoning designation creates an incentive for revitalization of this area, and is consistent with the proximity to the existing station site. However, successful revitalization of this housing will likely require the development of programs and incentives by

public agencies in cooperation with the community, private for profit and/or non-profit entities.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Given the largely built out character of the Study Area, it is likely that future growth in the area will reflect a continuation of the area's established strengths. The Study Area is extremely strong in retail trade, manufacturing, construction, and wholesale trade. As noted previously, the tremendous strength in the retail sector reflects the presence of the Northridge Fashion Center and other regional-scale shopping facilities near the intersection of Nordhoff and Tampa. While these facilities have essentially "maxed out" the area's foreseeable need for regional-serving retail development, existing voids for neighborhood and community oriented retail facilities suggest opportunities for future retail growth in other portions of the overall Study Area (i.e., along Reseda Boulevard).

Within the Manufacturing group, the Study Area appears to be especially well positioned to target the following sub-sectors: printing/publishing, computer manufacturing, electronics manufacturing, and manufacturing of measuring instruments. Strength in the above sub-sectors classifies the Study Area as a "high tech" business cluster.

Although not currently represented in the Study Area proper, there is significant base of "campus style" office development immediately west of the Study Area boundaries (including a major Washington Mutual facility). These types of uses would also appear to be appropriate targets for the Study Area. Given the potential mix of both industrial and office uses in the Study Area, a potential strategy to maximize the area's options would be to accommodate the development of "flex" space that can be occupied by both office and industrial uses.

According to the economic consultants, given the area's location within a "population rich" portion of the City of Los Angeles, and its proximity to major freeways and the Metrolink, it is very accessible to the regional labor pool. Moreover, the Economic Conditions Report suggests that the resident labor force in the immediate neighborhood is generally underemployed, and therefore represents an available workforce with skills generally consistent with the requirements of the target industries.

Local Financial Strategy

As described below, the Plan Area is not located within a redevelopment project area, a Federal Empowerment Zone, or a State Enterprise Zone. While this is "good news" in that it reflects the relatively healthy economic conditions in the area, it is "bad news" in that it means that businesses and development projects in the Plan Area will not have access to many of the public funding sources and financial incentives available in areas of the City that do have these designations. Accordingly, implementation of the recommended development program will need to be largely market-driven based on private investment. There are, however, strategies that the public sector can pursue in order to attract the desired public investment. In the economic consultant's opinion, the presence of the Metrolink station in the Study Area provides the single greatest funding opportunity

or "nexus" for implementation of this Plan.

A strategy that may be worth pursuing would be the use of the City's Housing Authority to facilitate redevelopment of multiple-family residential projects south of the existing Metrolink station (i.e., in Sub-Area G). This authority (which potentially includes eminent domain powers) would be utilized in lieu of redevelopment powers (given the absence of a redevelopment project area). While the City of Los Angeles has not traditionally used is Housing Authority for redevelopment purposes (instead delegating this function to the Community Redevelopment Agency), other cities in Southern California have used this approach very successfully. In the Northridge Study Area, the potential strategy would be to use the Housing Authority for site acquisition/assembly, allowing for private redevelopment of the site consistent with the Plan land uses.

E. STREETSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following streetscape recommendations will create a more comfortable pedestrian-oriented environment surrounding the Northridge Station.

i. Provide street trees at maximum 30 feet on center at all major streets, including but not limited to Parthenia Street, Nordhoff Street, Tampa Avenue, Wilbur Avenue, and Reseda Boulevard.

ii. To establish increased identity for the station area, within a quarter mile of the station, along Parthenia Street and Wilbur Avenue (Alternative A), or Parthenia Street and Reseda Boulevard (Alternative B), alternate Washingtonia Robusta palm trees with canopy trees.

iii. In general, provide minimum five foot sidewalks and seven-foot landscaped parkways within a quarter mile of the station.

iv. As feasible, provide a landscaped median with flowering trees within a quarter mile of the station.

v. To establish a residential context for the development north of the train tracks, along Wilbur Avenue between Nordhoff Street and Parthenia Street, establish a required fifteen-foot from property line landscaped setback requirement.

vi. To create a pedestrian scale within a quarter mile of the station, provide along major streets, sidewalks, and pathways, pedestrian-scaled lights.

vii. On the east side of Wilbur Avenue, between the train tracks and Parthenia Street, encourage the Department of Water and Power to provide landscaped setbacks, berms, and or vine-covered walls to mitigate the view into the existing switching station.

F. OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

To provide increased active and passive recreation and open space areas, encourage public agencies including but not limited to the Department of Water and Power, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and Metrolink to landscape existing open space areas and right-of-ways and develop an integrated bicycle and pedestrian trail system.

i. Provide an east and west pathway from the Department of Water and Power right-of-way to Aliso Canyon Wash.

ii. Provide a trail system along Aliso Canyon wash.

iii. Allow trails to start at Van Alden Park, cross the Wilbur Avenue Debris Basin and connect with the Department of Water and Power right-of-ways.

CHAPTER IV. CIRCULATION

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Project Area Street System

The transportation study area is generally defined as the area bounded by Nordhoff Street on the north, Parthenia Street on the south, Tampa Avenue on the west, and Reseda Boulevard on the east. The following five intersections within the immediate study area of the Northridge Metrolink station were analyzed as part of this study: Tampa Avenue at Parthenia Street; Tampa Avenue at Nordhoff Street; Reseda Boulevard at Parthenia Street; Reseda Boulevard at Nordhoff Street; and Wilbur Avenue at Parthenia Street.

Tampa Avenue is a Major arterial with three lanes in each direction. It carries an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 33, 800 north of Parthenia Street and 34, 800 south of Parthenia Street in the project area. The posted speed limit is 40 miles per hour (MPH) north of Parthenia Street and 35 MPH south of Parthenia Street. Parking is prohibited (No Stopping Anytime) on both sides of Tampa all day between Nordhoff Street and Parthenia Street and between 4-7 p.m. south of Parthenia Street creating the third p.m. peak hour travel lane in each direction.

Reseda Boulevard is a Major arterial with two lanes in each direction. It carries an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 34,200 between Nordhoff Street and Parthenia Street. The posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour (MPH). Parking restrictions exist on both sides of Reseda Boulevard for approximately one-half mile north of Parthenia Street (1 hr. 8 a.m.- 6 p.m.). Parking restrictions also exist on both sides of Reseda Boulevard for approximately one-half mile south of Nordhoff Street (2 hr. 8 a.m.- 6 p.m.).

Wilbur Avenue is a Secondary arterial with two lanes in each direction north of Nordhoff Street, one lane in each direction between Nordhoff Street and Parthenia Street, one land northbound south of Parthenia Street, and two lanes southbound south of Parthenia Street. It carries an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 7,900 south of Parthenia Street. The street segment of Wilbur Avenue between Nordhoff Street and Parthenia Street is discontinuous, interrupted by the Metrolink railroad tracks. Both segments have a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour (MPH). The northern segment of Wilbur Avenue is residential with no parking restrictions, while the southern segment of Wilbur Avenue is underdeveloped lacking parking designations with adequate walkways and crosswalks.

Nordhoff Street is a Major arterial with three lanes in each direction west of Tampa Avenue and east of Reseda Boulevard. The street segment between Tampa Avenue and Reseda Boulevard has two lanes in each direction and parking restrictions in the a.m. and p.m. peak hours. In the eastbound direction Nordhoff Street has a.m. parking restrictions (No Stopping 7-9 a.m.) that result in a third travel lane. The westbound direction of Nordhoff Street has p.m. parking restrictions (No Stopping 4-7 p.m.) that result in a third travel lane. The posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour (MPH) for the segment in the study area. It carries an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 43,500 east of Reseda Boulevard.

Parthenia Street is a Secondary arterial with two lanes in each direction. It carries an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 31,500 between Tampa Avenue and Wilbur Avenue, 30,100 between Wilbur Avenue and Reseda Boulevard, and 30,000 east of Reseda Boulevard. The posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour (MPH) west of Reseda Boulevard, and 40 miles per hour (MPH) east of Reseda Boulevard.

The Metrolink Park-and-Ride Station and Existing Trips

The Northridge Metrolink station is located at the northwestern corner of the Parthenia Street and Wilbur Avenue intersection and takes its access directly from Wilbur Street north of Parthenia. The park-and-ride facility currently has a total of 364 parking spaces on a surface parking lot, of which approximately 60 percent are usually occupied on an average weekday. The station currently experiences an average of 235 rail passenger boardings during a typical weekday AM peak period. Since this section of Wilbur Avenue ends at the Metrolink tracks, the only traffic carried by Wilbur Avenue north of Parthenia Street is the park-and-ride and drop-off traffic related to the station.

Traffic Impacts of the TOD Project at Wilbur Avenue

Based on analysis by the transportation consultants, the Metrolink park-and-ride station trips are projected to grow by 15 percent over 1999 levels. In the a..m. peak hour, only the intersection of Parthenia Street at Wilbur Avenue will be significantly impacted as a result of the TOD project. However, the p.m. peak hour impacts will be much higher. In the p.m. peak hour all five study intersections will be significantly impacted as a result of the TOD project.

B. TRAFFIC MITIGATION MEASURES

The transportation consultants have recommended the following mitigation measures to help mitigate the project's impacts.

Intersection Mitigation Measures

Various traffic improvement measures were considered to mitigate the identified significantly impacted study intersections. As recommended in the Northridge Transportation Improvement and Mitigation Program (TIMP), transportation systems management (TSM) measures including the Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control (ATSAC) is recommended for the study area intersections. ATSAC is a computer-controlled system, which optimizes signal timing to reflect changing traffic conditions and minimize delays. It also speeds the identification of traffic incidents and faulty signal machinery. The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT) estimates that the implementation of the ATSAC system will improve intersection capacity by up to 7 percent, provide significant reductions in travel time and delay over the existing signal timing, and reduce air emissions. None of the signals in the study area are currently controlled by the ATSAC system. Therefore, as a project mitigation measure, it is recommended that all five study intersections be incorporated into the ATSAC system. Additional mitigation measures include the following:

- Re-stripe the westbound Parthenia Street intersection approach to add an exclusive right-turn lane in addition to the existing two through and one left-turn lane. This right turn lane will serve the Metrolink station and the proposed commercial development. The improvement can be accommodated within the existing curb-to-curb width without the need for widening.

- Re-stripe the northbound Wilbur Avenue intersection approach by adding an exclusive right turn lane in addition to the existing two through and one left turn lane. This improvement will provide more capacity to the northbound through lanes lading into the Metrolink station and the proposed commercial development. The improvement can be accommodated within the existing curb-to-curb width without the need for widening.

Extension of Wilbur Avenue

The extension of Wilbur Avenue between Nordhoff and Parthenia as a four lane secondary arterial as recommended in the Northridge TIMP was considered as a base improvement in this TOD project. Although the current design of the station will make it difficult to extend Wilbur Avenue across the tracks at grade, this circulation improvement is seen as a necessary traffic mitigation measure for the overall circulation of the study area and the Northridge Community. The extension will relieve traffic congestion from both Tampa Avenue and Reseda Boulevard enabling them to accommodate the projected heavy north-south travel demand in the area by 2010. Without the Wilbur Avenue extension, future traffic conditions with the growth of the community plan land uses

and the implementation of the TOD project would be significantly worse than with conditions given the traffic relief provided by this street extension.

Fixed Route Transit Service and Other Trip Reduction Measures

The Northridge Metrolink station area is currently not served directly by any MTA bus lines. There are however a few MTA lines which serve the general area. These bus lines are as follows:

- Local Line 152, Fallbrook to Burbank Metrolink Station, which travels along Roscoe Boulevard in the vicinity of the station.
- Local Line 154, Porter Ranch to Burbank, which travels along Tampa Avenue in the vicinity of the station.
- Local Line 166, Chatsworth to Universal City, which travels along Nordhoff Street in the vicinity of the station.
- Local Line 167, Chatsworth to Studio City, which travels along Nordhoff Street in the vicinity of the station.
- Express Line 522, Northridge to Downtown Los Angeles, which travels along Reseda Boulevard in the vicinity of the station.

Currently, there are no MTA bus lines along Parthenia Street or Wilbur Avenue. With the recommended extension of Wilbur Avenue and the anticipated intensified residential and commercial developments proposed as part of this TOD effort, it will be necessary to reevaluate the revision and rerouting of some or all of the above lines to provide direct service to the Metrolink station area. Detailed service routing and evaluation of bus frequencies should be conducted to develop the most appropriate routing of the lines via Parthenia Street and/or Wilbur Avenue and assure that the bus schedules are coordinated and synchronized with the arrival of the Metrolink trains for maximum connectivity. By doing so, enhanced feeder services can be provided to Metrolink to improve ridership, reduce auto access trips, and the need for expansion of park and ride facilities. Specifically, the Northridge TIMP also recommended that MTA bus services in the area, specifically on routes 152, 154 and 166 be slightly revised to provide service to the Metrolink Station.

LADOT has applied for and received funding for DASH service in July 2000. This service will have 10 minute headways during the peak hours. Two buses will operate on a two-way loop route using Tampa Avenue, Nordhoff Street, Reseda Boulevard, and Parthenia Street. The buses will provide service to the Metrolink station by circulating and stopping along a specially constructed internal roadway in the recently improved park and ride facility. This service will also be operated by private operators under the management of LADOT and will receive its capital and operating funds through MTA's Transportation Demand Management (TDM) funds. The new service will provide an

opportunity to connect the Metrolink station with other major trip generator land uses in the area including the Northridge Fashion Center, other major commercial developments along Tampa Avenue and California State University Northridge. This transit shuttle service is seen as a significant opportunity to help mitigate traffic impacts by reducing automobile trips on the adjacent street system and achieve the trip reduction goals as indicated in the Northridge TIMP.

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY

The Northridge Neighborhood Implementation Plan is an implementing tool for the Northridge Community Plan, and is intended as a tool the community can use to help revitalize its neighborhood. It is designed to help guide and stimulate growth, and to make Northridge a more attractive and liveable place to live and work. The Plan envisions physical changes, as new development occurs, that will enhance commercial activity, employment, transit access, pedestrian environment, and public amenities, and to increase the compatibility of businesses and residential neighborhoods.

The Plan encourages increased ridership and use of the commuter rail system at the Northridge Metrolink Station. The Plan accomplishes this through urban design and land use standards more in keeping with the increased investment in public transit. The Plan envisions the station site developed with an above-grade parking structure that can serve increased numbers of commuters. Wilbur Avenue is connected north to south by building a new underpass beneath the railroad tracks. East and west of the station, new light industrial and flexible high technology office uses are encouraged. Existing housing south and west of the station is rehabilitated while new townhouse style housing is developed on infill sites north of the station. An open space network of trails and active and passive recreational space is developed at the underutilized debris basin, along the drainage washes and at Department of Water and Power right-of-ways.